

VZCZCXRO1654  
PP RUEHPA  
DE RUEHOS #0082/01 0560646  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 250646Z FEB 09  
FM AMCONSUL LAGOS  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0522  
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE  
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 0142  
RUEHYD/AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE 0192  
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH AFB UK  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC  
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC  
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHINGTON DC  
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC  
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LAGOS 000082

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

DOE FOR GPERSON, CHAYLOCK

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/19/2019  
TAGS: [EPET](#) [ASEC](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [NI](#)  
SUBJECT: NIGERIA: EXXONMOBIL HOUSING COMPOUND IN AKWA IBOM  
STATE ATTACKED

REF: 08 LAGOS 369

Classified By: Consul General Donna Blair for Reasons 1.4 (B,D)

11. (C) Summary: On February 17, twenty four gunmen attacked a jetty near an ExxonMobil housing complex in Eket, Akwa Ibom state. A Nigerian army unit stationed nearby to guard the complex drove them off after a 30 minute battle. Local security officials believe the gunmen are still in the area and ExxonMobil has removed the dependents of employees living at the complex. The attackers may be a mix of local residents and "militants" from neighboring states. While Exxon is pleased with the Nigerian army's response, the attack highlights growing insecurity in Akwa Ibom and Nigeria's far eastern oil fields. End Summary.

11. (C) On February 17, gunmen attacked a jetty near an ExxonMobil housing complex in Eket, Akwa Ibom State. A Nigerian army unit stationed nearby to protect the facility drove off the attackers and no ExxonMobil, Nigerian army, or other civilian casualties were reported. According to the number two executive at ExxonMobil Nigeria, David Findley, and a company security officer, at 2300 on February 17, two twin engine boats carrying twelve men each approached a jetty near the Eket housing complex along the Ibeno river. When the boats closed within 1000 meters of the jetty the armed men began firing their weapons into the air, alerting a nearby Nigerian army unit. The soldiers opened fire on the two boats and after a 30 minute firefight drove off the gunmen.

12. (C) When asked who the company thought was responsible for the attack, Findley said his security officers were not sure, but thought it may be a mix of Rivers State and Bayelsa-based "militants" and Akwa Ibom residents, including possibly residents of nearby Eket. The executive reported that company security personnel noticed a difference in this attack and previous security incidents. The boats carrying the gunmen traveled down the river to attack the housing complex as opposed to coming up river from the ocean as in previous incidents. To Exxon security personnel, this implied that the attackers had worked east through the creeks to enter the river; the company had previously believed gunmen left bases in other states, traveled offshore along the coast and came up river to attack. Using the creeks to enter the Ibeno River may indicate participation by people with a detailed knowledge of the local area and not just

opportunistic criminals from outside of Akwa Ibom. Findley reported that as of February 19 local GON security officials believe the gunmen are still in the area.

13. (SBU) ExxonMobil was pleased by the response of the Nigerian army. The army recently stationed soldiers near Eket in response to ExxonMobil's request for additional security following a December 3 attack on an ExxonMobil convoy traveling from the Eket housing complex to the nearby Qua Iboe oil export terminal. The Eket housing complex is home to fifty American ExxonMobil employees and spouses, other expatriates employees, and senior Nigerian staff members. Expatriate spouses departed Eket on February 19 in what Findley described as a temporary relocation; the company is working with Nigerian staff to move their dependents out of Eket as well. ExxonMobil wants all dependents out of the complex if possible.

14. (C) Comment: In September 2008, ExxonMobil expressed to us its concerns about a possible spillover of violence into Akwa Ibom after a string of attacks on oil installations in neighboring Rivers State (reftel). For years, the company's offshore operating profile and location in (at one time) relatively stable Akwa Ibom insulated it from the security problems routinely faced by Chevron and Shell whose operations are scattered throughout Delta, Rivers, and Bayelsa states. Those days of relative isolation appear to be over. Anecdotally at least, we have seen an increased number of attacks in Nigeria's eastern oil fields offshore Akwa Ibom. Additionally, the possibility that local residents may be assisting the gunmen has ExxonMobil

LAGOS 00000082 002 OF 002

concerned; it had thought the attackers came from communities outside its operating areas. One positive note is that ExxonMobil has been able to get the Nigerian army to respond to its concerns with concrete actions that appeared to have paid off, at least in the short term. However, the Nigerian navy continues to be ineffective in countering offshore and riverine attacks. End Comment.

15. (U) This cable has been cleared with Embassy Abuja.  
BLAIR